

Healthy Holiday Tips

By Emma Walters,
M.S., R.D., L.D.

During the holidays many of us like to indulge in special food treats – and many of us find ourselves overindulging and abandoning our good eating habits. The key to successful holiday eating is moderation and balance. The American Dietetic Association (ADA) emphasizes the importance of celebration and the fact that all foods can fit into a healthy eating plan. Food is one of the keys to enjoying the season and the memories special treats can evoke.



Some holiday eating tips from ADA include:

- Be realistic. The holiday season is not the time to lose weight, but is the time to maintain your weight. When you know you'll be consuming special holiday foods high in fat and/or calories, choose lower calorie foods in other meals that day to balance overall calorie intake.
- Be active and keep moving. Stay active by taking the stairs, parking farther from your destination, walking the aisles of the mall, bowling, hiking, dancing or other activities that you enjoy. Being active is one way to help use some of the extra calories and helps to keep our body fit.
- Take the edge off. Hunger can make it very difficult to avoid high-calorie foods and may also lead you to eat more of those foods than normal. To take the edge off hunger, eat a small, low-calorie snack like fruit, a whole-grain bagel or raw vegetables before your holiday celebration. This will take the edge off your hunger, making you less likely to be tempted to rush straight to the food when you arrive. Once you arrive, choose a beverage like sparkling water with a twist or sugar-free drinks instead of high-calorie punch, eggnog, alcohol and soft drinks.
- Make just one trip to the buffet. Be selective in the foods you eat at your celebration activities. Keep your portions small and select more of the lower calorie foods like raw vegetables with little or no dip, boiled shrimp or scallops with cocktail sauce or lemon and fresh fruit.
- Enjoy a sit-down dinner. Make your first helping small. If your hostess encourages seconds, then again

make the portions small. This will help keep your total consumption about the same as a normal portion.

Do not set yourself up for failure with an "all or nothing" attitude. Don't deny yourself special holiday foods, just eat them in small quantities and enjoy a variety of different foods. This strategy may also help prevent any guilt about indulging in holiday treats.

Wishing you a healthy, enjoyable holiday!

Future articles like this one will be provided by the Nutrition Subcommittee of the CHFS Employee Health and Wellness Committee.

Stroke: Three Survival Tips

Heart disease and stroke are the leading causes of death in Kentucky, killing more people than all cancers combined. In fact, stroke is the third-leading cause of death in the state. More than 2,000 Kentuckians die each year from stroke. It is also a leading cause of long-term disability. Every 45 seconds someone has a stroke. Each year, more than 700,000 Americans suffer a stroke.



When dealing with stroke, you can minimize risk and resulting damage by knowing the following three things:

1. Know your blood pressure and take steps to control high blood pressure. High blood pressure, also known as hypertension, is the leading cause of stroke and a leading cause of heart disease. Blood pressure recently has been classified into four categories:

- **Normal.** Below 120/80 mm Hg. Good job!
- **Pre-hypertension.** Between 120/80-139/89 mm Hg. You may need to modify some lifestyle habits like diet and exercise to: increase physical activity; eat less salt and saturated fats; include more lean protein such as fish; and add more fresh fruits and vegetables to your meals.
- **Hypertension, Stage 1.** Between 140/90-159/99 mm Hg. Seek professional medical help. Include lifestyle modifications; medication may be required.
- **Hypertension, Stage 2.** 160/100 mm Hg and higher. Seek professional medical help immediately.

One-third of Kentucky's adult population has high blood pressure. In fact, an estimated 30 percent of people with high blood pressure don't even know it. Only 34 percent of people with high blood pressure take medication and have it under control. Blacks are most affected, with nearly half of the adult population having high blood pressure.

Using a home blood pressure monitor may help to better understand and be aware of changes in personal blood pressure. Taking regular blood pressure readings also may encourage those receiving treatment to continue taking their medication and practicing healthy lifestyle habits – and give an advance signal when blood pressure rises to dangerous levels. Blood pressure monitors at your local grocery stores and pharmacies are also convenient ways to keep an eye on your numbers. The best advice is to speak to your health care provider about your blood pressure and possible treatments if it is high.

2. Know the warning signs of stroke. Stroke can be caused by either a blood clot or ruptured blood vessel obstructing blood flow to the brain. Warning signs include:

- **Sudden** onset of weakness or numbness of one side of the body.
- **Sudden** loss of vision or double vision, particularly in one eye.
- **Sudden** difficulty speaking or trouble understanding speech.
- **Sudden** severe headache with no known cause.
- **Sudden** onset of unexplained dizziness or imbalance.

If you think someone is having a stroke, think **FAST**:
Face, **A**rms, **S**peech and **T**ime.

Face: Does the face look uneven? Ask the person to smile.

Arms: Does one arm drift down? Ask the person to raise both arms.

Speech: Does speech sound strange? Ask the person to repeat a simple phrase like "The sky is blue."

Time: When did you observe the symptoms? Treatment within three hours of the onset of symptoms is most effective, so recognizing these symptoms early and seeking medical care immediately are critical to survival and preventing long-term disability.

3. Call 911 immediately. To prevent permanent brain damage or death, time is crucial for a stroke victim. EMS can get a person to a hospital quickly and the emergency room will be prepared when the ambulance arrives. Clot-busting treatment for stroke must be given within three hours of the onset of symptoms. Early detection of symptoms and a prompt call to 911 are the best responses to save lives and prevent disability from stroke.

For more information or if you have questions, please contact Brian Boisseau, program manager, Kentucky Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention Program, at (502) 564-7996, ext. 3823, or by e-mail: Brian.Boisseau@ky.gov

Public Health Officials Remind Consumers to Use Food Safety Tips

Food generally plays a large part in holiday celebrations, so it's a good time for the Department for Public Health to remind the public to keep food safety practices in mind.



Many holiday dinners include meat and poultry, possible sources of food-borne disease unless handled and prepared properly.

"Proper hand washing is the most effective way to keep food and guests safe," said Clyde Bolton, DPH's director of public health protection and safety. "It's also important to remember to keep cooking areas clean and to be sure food is well-prepared. Once the meal is over, perishable items should be packaged well and stored at a proper temperature."

Holiday buffets, party trays or even an improperly prepared or stored turkey could be the culprit behind holiday illnesses. Improperly stored food can become a breeding ground for bacteria that can cause illness. About 76 million people each year become sick from contaminated or otherwise unsafe food.

Here are a few simple food safety tips to help you avoid getting sick this holiday season:

- **Wash hands** – Wash hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water and use a paper towel to dry. Wash hands after every trip to the restroom, before preparing foods, after handling raw meat and before eating. Clean hands help prevent the spread of potentially illness-causing microorganisms.
- **Clean** – Wash and sanitize all surfaces after food contact and often during food preparation and service. To sanitize utensils, immerse 30 seconds in clean, hot (170 degrees Fahrenheit) water or immerse for at least 60 seconds in a chlorine and water solution (one teaspoon 5.25 percent household bleach per gallon of water). Bacteria can spread to and from cutting boards, knives and countertops. Wash fruits and vegetables before preparing.

- **Thaw properly** – To safely thaw a turkey use one of these methods:
 - Place the turkey in a refrigerator at 41 degrees Fahrenheit or cooler (allow 3-4 days for thawing);
 - Run cool (75 degrees or cooler) water over turkey; or
 - Thaw turkey in microwave and cook immediately.
- **Take temperatures** – Cook a turkey at 325 degrees until the internal temperature reaches at least 165 degrees. Cooked, hot foods should be kept at 140 degrees or warmer. Be sure to use a food thermometer to check temperatures.
- **Keep it cold** – Cold foods should be kept at 41 degrees or cooler. After the turkey is served, immediately slice and refrigerate sliced turkey on shallow platters. Use refrigerated turkey and stuffing within three to four days. Use gravy within one to two days. If freezing leftovers, use within two to six months for best quality.
- **Transport safely** – Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold.
- **Reheat** – Leftover turkey and stuffing should be stored separately. Rapidly reheat leftovers to a minimum internal temperature of 165 degrees.

“Remember the two-hour rule,” said DPH Commissioner William D. Hacker, M.D. “Do not leave perishable food out at room temperature for more than two hours.”

For more information and free literature about food safety, contact the Food Safety Branch at (502) 564-7181 or visit <http://chs.ky.gov/publichealth/Food-Program.htm>.

The Cabinet wishes you a safe and happy holiday.

Think About Safety While Shopping for Toys and Holiday Decorations

These are the busiest shopping days of the year as Americans hurry to purchase holiday gifts and decorations. With that in mind, the Cabinet for Health and Family Services urges shoppers to take a few minutes during this busy time to think about safety.



“Health and Family Services wants all Kentuckians to enjoy a wonderful and healthy holiday season,” said

William D. Hacker, M.D., commissioner of the Department for Public Health. “The best way to do that is to equip yourself with a few simple safety tips to remember before you go shopping, purchase a toy or decorate a Christmas tree. No one should ever suffer an injury – or worse consequence – under circumstances that could have been easily prevented.”

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Consumer Product Safety Commission, the holidays are safer and happier if people take time to follow some simple safety guidelines about toys, trees, lights and decorations. Here’s a closer look at some general safety guidelines for the holidays:

Toy Safety

- Follow recommended age ranges on toy packages. Toys that are too advanced for a child’s age could be a safety hazard.
- Read instructions carefully before buying a toy or allowing your child to play with a toy received as a gift. If the toy is appropriate for your child, show him how to use it properly.
- Be careful with holiday gift wrapping, like bags, paper, ribbons and bows. These items can pose suffocation and choking hazards to a small child.
- Be aware that children age 3 and younger can choke on small toys or games parts and balls smaller than 1 ¾ inches in diameter.
- Remove strings and ribbons from toys before giving them to young children. Children younger than 8 can choke or suffocate on deflated or broken balloons. Pull toys with strings longer than 12 inches can pose strangulation hazards for babies.
- Be sure older siblings keep games and toys with small parts away from younger brothers and sisters.
- Toys also should be put away safely to prevent trips and falls. Many injuries occur when toys are left out.

In 2004, about 210,000 toy-related injuries were treated nationally in emergency rooms. Also, 16 toy-related fatalities were reported in 2004, up from 11 in 2003. Seven of these involved wheeled toys. Vehicles like scooters, bicycles, all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), skateboards, big wheels and tricycles are popular holiday gifts, but all come with certain risks to users. In 2004, two scooter-related deaths, one riding toy fatality and four tricycle fatalities were reported. Overall, wheeled toys account for more injuries than any other kind of toy.

If considering an ATV purchase, remember to ask the salesperson about age and recommended engine sizes. Children younger than 6 should never operate or ride on an

ATV. Children 6-12 should only ride operate or ride ATVs with engines smaller than 70cc. Children and youth 12-16 may safely operate ATVs with engines between 70-90cc and young adults older than 16 safely operate ATVs with engine sizes larger than 90cc.

Trees

- Look for artificial trees labeled "fire resistant." Although the tree may still catch fire, its fire resistant properties will help resist burning and fire should extinguish quickly.
- Check live trees for freshness. A fresh tree is green, needles are hard to pull from branches and when bent between your fingers, needles do not break. The cut end of a fresh tree should be sticky with resin and when tapped on the ground the tree should not lose many needles.
- Place trees away from fireplaces, radiators and portable heaters. Because live trees can rapidly dry in heated rooms, keep the stand filled with water. Place the tree out of the way of traffic and do not block doorways.
- Cut a few inches off the trunk of your tree to expose fresh wood before placing it in the stand so the tree will better absorb water and remain fresher longer.

Lights

- Use only lights approved by a respected safety testing laboratory for compliance with safety standards. Use only lights that have fused plugs.
- Check each set of lights, new or old, for broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bare wires and loose connections. Throw out damaged sets and always replace burned-out bulbs promptly with the same wattage bulbs.
- Use no more than three standard-size sets of lights per single extension cord. Make sure the extension cord is rated for the intended use.
- Never use electric lights on a metallic tree. The tree can become charged with electricity from faulty lights, and a person touching a branch could be electrocuted.
- Check labels on outdoor lights to be sure they are certified for outdoor use.
- Fasten outdoor lights securely to trees, house walls or other firm supports to protect the lights from wind damage. Use only insulated staples to hold strings in place, not nails or tacks. Or, run strings of lights through hooks (available at hardware stores).
- Turn off all lights when you go to bed or leave the house to guard against undetected fires from short circuits.
- For added shock protection, plug electric outdoor decorations into outlets protected by ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs). Portable outdoor GFCIs

can be purchased where electrical supplies are sold. A qualified electrician can install GFCIs permanently to household outlets.

Decorations

- Use only non-combustible or flame-resistant materials to trim a tree. Choose plastic or nonleaded metal tinsel and artificial icicles. Leaded materials are hazardous if swallowed by children.
- Never use lighted candles on a tree or near other evergreens. Always use non-flammable holders, and place candles where they will not be knocked down.
- Take special care to avoid sharp and breakable decorations, keep trimmings with small removable parts out of the reach of children and pets to prevent choking and avoid decorations that resemble candy or food.
- Wear gloves to avoid eye and skin irritation while decorating with spun glass material like "angel hair." Follow container directions carefully to avoid lung irritation while decorating with artificial aerosol snow sprays.

Emergency rooms treat about 12,500 people each year for injuries such as falls, cuts and shocks related to holiday decorations and Christmas trees. In addition, 11,600 candle-related fires occur each year, resulting in 150 deaths, 1,200 injuries and \$173 million in property losses. Christmas trees are involved in about 300 fires annually, resulting in 10 deaths, 30 injuries and an average of more than \$10 million in property loss and damage.

For more information, visit www.safekids.org or www.aap.org or www.cpsc.gov or call Mike Cavanah or Tammy Warford, Environmental Management Branch, Department for Public Health, (502) 564-4856.

Winter Exercise

Just as the temperature starts to drop, the dessert tray grows bigger and more seductive. It's a cruel irony of the holiday season, particularly for those who enjoy outdoor physical activity and are trying to follow a healthy eating plan.

But, according to Jennye Grider with the Department for Public Health, keeping up with your fitness regimen during the grueling Thanksgiving-to-Christmas stretch is possible if you follow a few simple guidelines.



Start off by tapping a walking/exercise partner. "Working out with a partner will keep you motivated," Grider said. It's easy to slack off on workouts when no one else is counting on you to show up. When an exercise buddy expects you to be at the track or aerobics class, you are more likely to keep that commitment.

And remember to keep the routine entertaining.

Run a marathon or sign up for ballroom dancing. The method, according to Grider, is up to the individual and should be something you enjoy; otherwise, it's an uphill battle. "If exercise is not enjoyable, you will not continue," she said.

The next step is knowing what you're doing in terms of intake and output. Avoiding holiday weight gain is strictly a numbers game and you've got to keep burning more calories than you take in.

"Purchase a pedometer and track how many miles, steps and calories you burn each day," said Grider.

It's also important to recognize that personal schedules change more often – and are much busier – during the holidays, so keeping up with exercise requires planning.

If a hectic holiday schedule creates a workout barrier for you, consider grabbing some exercise time during the day. Grider advises bringing a pair of walking shoes to work and squeezing in physical activity during breaks and lunch time. You can also burn some extra calories by remembering to stick to common sense practices like taking the stairs instead of the elevator or escalator and parking farther away from the building.

Be sure to give yourself credit for all your hard work. One of the greatest tools to help keep you motivated is a positive attitude.

Grider said keeping an exercise log can help validate your hard work and help keep track of progress along the way. Use a lot to record minutes, miles and time and to keep a written record of your progress and accomplishments.

For those who need a daily reminder, purchase a wrist watch with an alarm. Set the alarm to go off at the time of day when take a walk, Grider said.

For more information or to join a walking group, contact Grider at Jennye.Grider@ky.gov.

Stop smoking with Cooper Clayton classes beginning in January

The best way to succeed at anything is to plan ahead.

Begin making plans now to successfully quit smoking in 2006 by making a New Year's resolution to participate in a free smoking cessation program available to CHFS employees in the CHR Building in January.



The Cooper Clayton Method to Stop Smoking program is a series of 12 one-hour classes that combines social support with nicotine replacement therapy to help smokers quit. Nicotine patches will be offered at a reduced price for program participants. Look for details in future editions of the Focus.

The Holiday Season Doesn't Have to Be a Bummer

As the holiday season approaches we are reminded of holidays past – memories both good and bad. Recent worries and adjustments in our lives sometimes seem more severe and difficult during the holidays. Events like job changes; the birth, illness or death of loved ones; moving away from family or friends; having a family member away on active military service; and myriad other situations can lead to stress, anxiety and depression, especially during the holidays.



People may react to intensified stress and other hardships during the holiday season in any number of different ways, from undertaking serious self-examination and seeking support if needed to silently suffering bouts of depression.

If you experience high levels of anxiety or emotional stress, consider making small changes to make the season and your emotions more manageable. To avoid becoming "bummed out" and to find more enjoyment during the holidays this year, consider some of these suggestions:

Traditions – Whether your family or community traditions date back many generations or you're just beginning to establish new traditions, don't become overwhelmed trying to live up to unrealistic expectations

when you're simply not feeling up to the task. Traditions can and should be put on hold when maintaining them becomes too difficult. There is no rule that requires a family to practice the same rituals and routines every year, so feel free to make changes when necessary. On the other hand, many people find comfort and relief from stress in traditions and, when that's the case, by all means continue them. Whatever your decision where holiday traditions go, remain sensitive to their impact on you and your family and be flexible and open to changes as each person's needs require. Sometimes just trying something new and different can be a cure for the blues.

Expectations – Keep your expectations realistic. Make a list of things to do and then prioritize that list by eliminating unnecessary tasks and scaling back as your mood, energy level and finances allow. And don't hesitate to ask for help when you need it.

Time for yourself – Spending time with the special and supportive people in your life is very important during the holidays. Yet, it's also important not to neglect yourself in the hustle and bustle of the season. Care for yourself by eating well, exercising, getting adequate sleep and taking time to do something nice just for you. Most importantly, remember to stop occasionally to just breathe and relax.

The good news – Holiday stress and intensity are generally short-lived and subside as daily routines resume. Remember to seek the sympathetic ear of a family member, friend, physician, clergy or professional counselor when you need additional support.

If this is the first holiday season since the passing of a loved one or if this year your family is experiencing serious illness or missing a loved one in the military or away from home for other reasons, here are some coping tips to help avoid becoming overwhelmed with grief and the emotional demands of the season:

- Acknowledge the absence of loved ones and how you feel about it. Grief is a natural response to a loved one's death or absence. Avoiding the fact that someone or something is missing will not eliminate the feelings and without a healthy way to express those feelings, grief can be compounded and even cause you to feel physically ill and emotionally distressed.
- Find a way to include the memory. Plan some activity to honor the absent person. This could be as simple as a moment of silence or displaying a picture.
- Choose good holiday companionship. It is important to plan ahead and avoid isolation during the holidays.

Choose the company of people with whom you feel safe and comfortable.

- Avoid excessive alcohol consumption. Self-medicating with alcohol and drugs is a common way some people try to avoid painful memories and feelings of loss, grief, fear and anxiety. In reality, however, alcohol and drugs only increase the negative feelings and can also leave users feeling guilty and hopeless.

If you or someone you know is coping with feelings of grief, helplessness, hopelessness or isolation, help is available by calling your local community mental health center (visit http://mhmr.ky.gov/files/CMHC_Crisis.pdf) or dialing 911. For further information on mental health, visit <http://mhmr.ky.gov/MH/>.